THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

Written for young people who are anxious to be loyal to the tradition of their elders but find it difficult to interpret religion in the old terms, and looks at the Kingdom in its spiritual and social aspects and sets it forth as a perfect adjustment of society and the individual. The challenge of such a fellowship to the youth of the Church is set forth in a way that cannot fail to enlist their eager sympathy and co-operation.

BY

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BY
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To My Mother

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INTRODUCTION

This small book has been written with a definite purpose. There is in the Churches to-day a large body of young people who are desperately anxious to be loyal to the tradition of their elders, but find it difficult to interpret religion in precisely the same terms. They are products of a different generation, and find it more difficult to make a true adjustment of the thought they receive from so many sources. There is danger when Religion moves from a profound doctrinal basis and is made to consist in airy platitudes or a false intellectualism. We impoverish religion by any wrong emphasis which leaves the central fact of sin and salvation neglected. Yet old wine can be poured into new wineskins.

This essay attempts to deal with the subject of the Kingdom of God in a way any young person may understand. Nowhere has an argument been expanded at length. Throughout I have tried to be suggestive and not exhaustive. Perhaps in so doing I have stimulated thought, even if I have not satisfied it. I am aware that no book is to be commended merely because it is simple and short, but this is a personal interpretation of Christ's teaching, and helping me, it may be found of some slight help to others.

MALDWYN EDWARDS.

CHAPTER I

THE PERSONAL APPROACH

It is a perplexing matter for man to-day to find a right path through the tangle-growth of beliefs. If he is educated enough to have a due humility, he prefers to listen to experts and base his opinions on their research. Indeed, it is hard to do otherwise. Each field of inquiry is so vast that only the specialist can afford the time and labour to acquire a really adequate knowledge of the subject. In consequence, we are largely in the hands of experts. The most we can do is to use their findings to come to our own conclusions.

In the studies embraced by science that is not at all regrettable. When one is dealing with quantity there is necessarily more assurance and conviction than in any pronouncement on qualitative values. In science you analyze and measure, but there are some things which defy analysis and which may not be measured. In such a field as religion, it is absurd to expect the same unanimity of opinion among experts, as in fields which can be plotted out and defined. Necessarily there can be no finality. The quest is an endless one. None by searching can find out God. Therefore, religion ought to be the one subject in which there is least dogmatism and intolerance.

There can never be in religion the same type of authority as in Science. There can never be the authority of demonstrable proof. Attempts have been made to find such authority, but they have inevitably failed.

A large section still accepts the authority of the Church, and has to bear, therefore, the heavy burden of a set organization and a rigid theology. There is no room for individual inquiry and appeal. This is an attempt, and a hopeless one, to give to the Church an absolute authority which in religion can never be found.

Others still accept the authority of an infallible book. This seems even more illogical than the first position. For a more generous conception of the word Church as the fellowship of all believers, makes one feel that any considered common decisions of so wide embracing a body, would have a certain inner authority of their own. But in no sense can the Bible be exalted as an unerring guide. To accept a literal inspiration is to impoverish the Bible immensely. Esther is on such showing of equal inspiration as St. John, and the folklore in the Old Testament is as trustworthy as the Gospel narratives. No just appreciation is given to the amazing record of a people's search after God from earliest crudities of thought to the rich New Testament teaching. More serious even than that, the individuality of the various writers and the way in which their particular message was conditioned by their character and temperament is overlooked.

A third kind of authority has been sought in

various interpretations of the inner light. Quite obviously this authority is as lacking in authority as the others. If the inner light be taken to mean an inward monitor which gives one direct perception of right and wrong, all history contradicts the theory. Men have different ideas of right and wrong in different stages of culture, and in different systems of religious thought. At first, man is bound by custom, and may do with great unction what we would consider ethically wrong. The various taboos and restrictions may rest on quite irrational and immoral bases, but he is swayed by immemorial tradition, though it has been moulded in great part by religious beliefs. In the second stage of law and its wider unwritten connotation man is still governed by external considerations of right and wrong, and the value of conduct depends upon the worth of the law. Even when we are no longer influenced by rewards and punishments, we still tend to be guided by the approval or disapproval of the circles in which we move.

The highest stage of development comes when one is moved by an ideal which makes one indifferent to rewards and punishments, and careless of social approval or disapproval. Conscience then is no more than the moral judgement of the individual, and because man is subject to change and development, conscience can never be regarded as fixed and determinate.

And yet perhaps it is in this general direction that the solution of the problem of authority in religion may be found. There is more in the doctrine of

'Assurance,' for example, than is commonly understood. It affirms that in the last analysis we know of God and His will for us, not by reference to any external authority, but by the witness of our own spirits. God communicates Himself in many ways, but the ultimately convincing way is when on the basis of a reasoned faith we ourselves experience Him.

There is a subjective element in this which would seem to deny any universal objective standard of reference in religion. Different people may experience God in different ways, and come to widely different conclusions. Who is to say which of them is right? The answer is, of course, nobody, because nobody has any final right to decide, though rough tests such as results in character and conduct may legitimately be applied.

Jesus declared that man must come into a personal experience of God before he could know Him. It was not enough that he should know the Law and the Prophets, and what anything or any one said about God. The man must come to a personal knowledge of God, if he was to know God truly. Now this is profound and axiomatic. We cannot accept any authority about God but the authority of our own convictions. We may find our beliefs substantiated in many ways, but the primary essential is that we have come to those beliefs ourselves.

In his thought-provocative book, *The Mind in the Making*, James Harvey Robinson has pictured the missionary who is quite prepared to believe that

the people he wishes to convert are Buddhists because their parents were Buddhists, but is wholly oblivious to the fact that he is a Baptist because his parents were Baptists, and he was brought up in the Baptist Church at Puddlebury. The plain truth is that because of our great conservatism we are terribly tenacious of customs and belief. Only with the greatest difficulty can the few independent, original thinkers lead us to discard outworn beliefs and adopt new forms of thought, or when as with the doctrine of hell fire, the change of belief comes through society itself, and not particular members—the old dies a hard and lingering death.

The consequence is we defend much we have outgrown, simply because it seems part of our lives. That is why anomalies persist in all spheres of life. Religion is no exception. We tacitly accept very much that has been consecrated by tradition and age.

Our theology is to no inconsiderable extent received as though it was a legacy of final and unquestionable value. And so in its main stream it may be, but what we take without discrimination and reflection, we have not appropriated to ourselves. The man who has thought out his position, and as a result, modified, or altered, his theological views, is in a far happier position than one who has accepted a whole theological system and never asked why. When a man refers to the godly influences by which he was helped as a boy, the question one would always like to ask is whether such a man has merely allowed these to determine his

religion, or whether, with the help of these, his religion has been self-determined. The only religion any of us possesses, are those beliefs, few or many, which we have explained and made real to ourselves. The rest is not us, but what we carry with us.

The conclusion is that if our particular religion is to have such authority as to compel our allegiance, it must have its witness in our experience. No one can demonstrate the binding authority of any religion. It can rest on no universal basis, but it can make contact with separate individuals and exercise separate authority.

> What we have felt and seen,
> With confidence we tell.

Every individual, however, is born into a society, and is heir to the traditions of the past. His judgement must ultimately be personal and independent, but the material he uses to come to his own conclusions is a social heritage. There is surely a great truth in Catholicism and its reverence for the past. We need not blindly accept any particular authority, but we are foolish to ignore what the acutest minds of the past have bequeathed to us. A light-hearted contempt for all but the present is always evidence of shallow thinking, for the roots of the present are in the past, and we have only entered into the labours of others. We dare not minimize the weight of historical tradition. The ends of all the ages have come upon us and what others have sought, felt, and known down the centuries, must necessarily

mould our thinking, and help to shape our opinions. In that sense we do well to be children of Wesley and Newman: heirs of an Evangelical and a Catholic tradition. Let us seek a present personal experience, but let us use with awe and gratitude the accumulated wisdom of the past.

CHAPTER II

THE MESSAGE OF THE KINGDOM

We are not ignorant of the teaching of Jesus. The expert may be able to handle the material more critically, but he does not know more of the sayings of Jesus than the instructed layman. Those not attached to any religious body are familiar with the general philosophy of the Christian life. They know the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, and of the salvation that is offered through Jesus Christ. They know of the injunctions to love God and one's neighbour, and they have at least a hazy notion of the type of character implied in the Beatitudes. Yet, the fact must be faced, that the message does not affect them vitally.

When one is listening to a speech, or sermon, what matters most is not the number of points made, but the central message which gives the whole speech a unity. If that is lacking no amount of eloquence in the separate points, will cause the speech to be permanently effective. To remember scattered points in the teaching of Jesus is not enough. We must know the central theme which unified the separate parts of His teaching. That theme was the Kingdom of God.

The teaching of Jesus was strongly influenced by

the thought forms of His age. When He spoke of the Last Things, the language was that of His century, however much greater the content may have been. His great vision of the Kingdom of God was the transmuting of a conception already familiar to His countrymen. He was born, in fact, into a people which awaited the reign of God. True, there was not one rigid and universally accepted idea about the Kingdom, but in the main essentials, people were commonly agreed. They believed the new age was to be brought in by a Messiah who was to be a Warrior Prince. His intervention was to be decisive, and effect the material salvation of His people. After His death, His second appearance was to be catastrophic and final. Jesus gave the whole conception a spiritual meaning, but He did use it.

He transformed the current idea of the Kingdom in three main ways. First of all, He made a fresh approach to the subject in its social aspect. The Kingdom was to mean not King and subjects, but Father and children. This necessarily meant that all men are potentially the sons of God. There is no room for Jewish exclusiveness, no hint of Gentile inferiority. Men are all equal in God's love of them, and their need of Him.

Secondly, He gave it a different political complexion. The only power was spiritual in quality, and was to be used not to conquer, not even to rule, but to serve. The only ones to be called great were those great in certain qualities of the disposition.

Lastly, He gave this conception a new spirituality. Together with the 'Son of Man' in the Books of Daniel and Enoch, there was the prophecy of the 'Suffering Servant' in Deutero—Isaiah. But the first idea of the 'Warrior Prince' was welcomed, to the exclusion of the second, and the Jews anticipated material glory rather than spiritual deliverance. Jesus preached salvation, not from the oppressor without, but the foe within. It is not so much that He used the Suffering Servant prophecy in His teaching, for there is little direct reference to it, but He obviously felt His life and approaching death to be in that tradition, and serving such spiritual ends. He used mostly the language of the 'Son of Man' prophecies and gave it the spiritual reference of the Suffering Servant.

This meant that He conceived of His Kingdom as inward and spiritual even whilst necessarily it would have outward effects. Mankind is ideally, though not actually a family. Men can only realize their earthly relationship when they have recognized their relationship to God. But they cannot know God as Father until they see that He loves and cares for His children. Now this love cannot be demonstrated in any abstract intellectual way if it is to bring conviction and response, but through a human drama which will make man see at the one time the love of God and their own sin. This can only be done by the way in which Love receives the utmost fury of sin. If love can still be seen at its best when man's sin is at its worst; if its character remains unchanged, despite the utmost testing; then man may

know that greater even than the sin which nails love on a cross, is the Love which suffers there.

In these three ways, then, Jesus gave the Kingdom of God a new significance. The new attitude to God, which His teaching involved, meant a new relationship of man to man, and so dependent on the new spiritual conception is a new ethical code, and ultimately a new order of society. For it is true that the Kingdom of God is regarded as spiritual in quality; but it is also true that the New Jerusalem descends out of Heaven from God, and that together with a new Heaven there is a new Earth.

For us who are coming increasingly to see the majestic order in the universe, it is easy to believe that like order governs the Kingdom of God. Scientists dimly apprehending the vast laws which work through Nature are able, through them, to see its magic and feel its mystery. By using what they cannot explain, they can utilize its resources. Jesus came to say that all things were possible to God, and therefore to man with God. But man must understand the laws working in the spiritual realm if he is to harness the energies of God. Since God is Father, there is only one great law by which we live. Through love there is the supreme miracle of God becoming Man, and through love, man passes through the outer courts to the inner presence of God. The resources of God become available for Man.

But love is a word too lightly used for us to abuse it. We employ it so often, and to cover so many relations, that even when we use it of God its old associations cling. One may not lightly criticize

erotic language in religion for it has been used by saints and mystics down the ages, but there is an obvious danger. Too often it familiarizes God until all idea of His transcendence is lost. Now the love of God is a holy love, and we impoverish our relation to God if there is no awe in our love.

St. John asks how may we love God whom we have not seen, if we do not love our brother whom we have seen. But we cannot love God at all in precisely the manner we love our brother. To see God in the face of Jesus Christ is to make possible an overwhelming adoration, but that is far different from human love. When the intimate knowledge of God's Fatherhood is combined with a profound recognition of His sovereignty, then we love Him as He deserves to be loved.

In this love to God which begets a love to His other children there is a spiritual law by which we live. But this law has many implications which Jesus showed in the Beatitudes. It means that all our conventional ideas of society are upset. We give an honoured place to the rich, to those who laugh, and those who are full. The first remain the first. But Jesus reverses the whole order. The rich, the complacent, the satisfied, are all judged. The first become last. More than that, the qualities society is accustomed to depreciate, receive a new dignity. The truly happy are the meek, lowly, pure, the mourners, and the peacemakers. The teaching is tremendous in its direct challenge to the values by which men judge life. Even now, implicitly, the ethic of the Warrior Prince governs

society, and we seek the whole world, though we may lose our own soul. But in deadly grapple with this is the ethic of Jesus, and the future of mankind rests on the issue of the struggle.

The Shepherds and Wise Men found a common meeting place at the cradle of a baby, and it is difficult to imagine how else they could be brought together. The baby acknowledges no distinctions of wealth or rank; the pride of learning and the pomp of power are as nought. The Shepherds from the hills are as welcome as the Kings from the East. Since men are unequal in their talents and intellect, there will always be a certain political, economic, and even social inequality, even though before the Law there is equality. But there is a sure ground of equality where the King is as the Shepherd. We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and for us all there is the assurance of deliverance. In our common need of God, and in the common satisfaction of that need, there is the one meeting place for all sorts and conditions of men. Christianity is the religion of the child, for it offers the one effective communism. Its most sacred feast is that in which all men partake the common elements of life. It is the religion of the child, for it offers to man, in its teaching on love and sacrifice, a unity of the spirit which binds together all classes and prepares the way for the City of God. Some day it will be seen that before man can live as one in a new order of society, the pilgrimage to Bethlehem must be made. After the warrior and the ruler the government shall be upon the shoulders of a child.

A great daily newspaper recently conducted a series of articles on what Christ would do if He came to London. The majority of the contributors imagined Him sweeping away abuses, and introducing reforms : a purely subjective interpretation of Christ's mind. Confessedly it is interesting to imagine Christ denouncing the thoughtless rich, the brewers, and bookmakers. It makes a vivid newspaper article to imagine Him hurling denunciations and proclaiming a new order. But Jesus would not work that way. John the Baptist would, for that was his method. It is the method earnest-minded reformers have adopted down the centuries.

There were vested interests, scandals, and abuses in our Lord's day. He never directly attacked their position, but He undermined it, so that when His message bore fruit, the whole structure on which such evils rested, came crashing down. One looks in vain for any open attack on war and slavery, or the low position of womanhood and childhood ; but His whole teaching is a direct challenge which made such evils intolerable. Christianity is not a wordy denunciation of evil, but a power destroying its very foundations. There is immense explosive force in every Beatitude. Treat them as articles of life, and the dealers in alcohol, gambling, unscrupulous finance, war, will all have to go. The presence of Christian qualities necessarily implies the absence of arrogance, ostentation, cruelty, oppression, hatred, and selfishness. And it is from these sins of disposition that abuses come.

The conclusion of the matter is that whilst Christ taught the Kingdom as inward and spiritual, it inevitably produces dramatic outward and visible results.

CHAPTER III

THE KINGDOM IN ITS SPIRITUAL ASPECT

The great law in the Kingdom of God that love creates and hate destroys, is most clearly seen in the life of Jesus. We have tended, one feels, to place an almost undue emphasis on the Cross, and thereby lessened the significance of His birth and life. A great deal of theology has been made to rest upon the Cross that could fittingly be made to rest on the broader basis of His birth, life, and death. But the Cross is the supreme illustration of the divine Love. We rest our doctrines of forgiveness and redemption, surely, on the one simple fact that a love which refuses to be daunted by man's sin, and for man gladly offers itself, is a love wider than our sin, and therefore capable of infinite mercy; and stronger than death, and therefore of infinite power to redeem. We do not think of ransom, propitiation, and redemption in their oldest connotation, but the truth those doctrines conserved we find more simply in the miracle of divine love, which redeems at the price of its own intensest suffering.

Now such love is manifested as much in the birth and life of Jesus as in His death. His coming in great humility, that self-emptying which caused Him to be found in fashion as a man, makes Christ-

mas equally with Easter, a festival of the love of God. And in the ministry of Jesus there is the same evidence of a love giving itself for the loved.

It is by this love shown from manger to cross that we are forgiven, redeemed, regenerated. On such love hangs our eternal destiny. But there are certain aspects of this love, suffering and sacrificing for its object, which ought to be stressed.

It is the declaration that one wins, not by conquering, not by ruling, but by serving in a righteous cause. To lose thus means that one has won. It is the philosophy of life through death, of victory through defeat. It means one never attains the good upon which the heart is set by forcing, cajoling, persuading, but by wooing. It means that the world will be won by a love which tires out malice, and is never wearied by sin ; a love which suffers without thought of revenge, and by the nobility of its sacrifice, shames, and finally convinces, its adversaries. Those who have sneered at the philosophy as anæmic and effeminate condemn themselves. It argues the highest courage to display these qualities of meekness, lowliness, and self-sacrifice, when the infinitely easier thing would be to retaliate assertively. The trouble is that so often the doctrine of passivity is pushed to absurd limits : a general principle of life is distorted and applied to trifling particular cases. Jesus suffered passively the utmost consequences of human sin, but there were particular cases in which He justly asserted Himself. Such instances, when they come, the individual must justify to himself. But as a guide of life it is one

who before his shearers is dumb, who saves. The very silence in which he receives stripes, unjustly given, creates that response which heals the nations.

Examples abound in science, art, medicine, of those who worked for no personal reward, but who toiled, suffered, and sacrificed in the service of their work. And their achievements are not national, but the heritage of humanity. In the things of the spirit, personal and petty distinctions do not matter overmuch. One does not draw set lines of race or nationhood in art, science, and medicine: their achievements enrich the common stock.

The next great step is to free politics from a too rigid insularity. No nation economically is able to live to itself, but a nation may so adjust its national aspirations that hope of a commonwealth of nations is destroyed. There is as much need in politics that a nation be prepared to suffer and sacrifice that the good of all may be increased, as in the achievements of the human spirit. That at any rate, is the means by which God would save the world. For our spiritual welfare we have the amazing fact that God in Jesus, suffered even to the extremity of the Cross.

If Jesus perfectly reflects the mind of God, then in His life we may see God's attitude to life. We cannot look for an intellectual explanation of the problem of sin, pain, and death, but we do find a practical solution. Jesus never drew back the veil from the mysteries of life, but He showed how they might be approached. In the way Jesus met the obtuseness of His friends and the hatred of His enemies, in the way He met pain and death, we see

the path marked out for us. Jesus showed that what matters is not the dulness of your friends, nor the malice of your enemies, but the love with which you meet both—not how much you have to suffer, but how you suffer. It is not the odds, but the spirit with which you oppose them which ultimately counts. In the cause of the Highest, it is not a stern defiance, nor a blind submission to the facts of sin and pain, but a willing acceptance of them that is needed, that by a right use they may be transmuted to further God's high ends.

But a philosophy of life, however noble, is not enough, for it passes by the fact of man's weakness in the light of the lofty teaching he is expected to practise. Jesus came not to show a way of life, but to give life. He is not only the Way, and the Truth, but the Life itself. The love shown throughout His life was much more than an example, it was a revelation of God's identification with man. As God had identified himself with man in his sin, so man could become identified with God in His righteousness. It was, therefore, a promise that, caught up by Divine love, man could not only be forgiven, but renewed. God, who had shown him the way to tread, would give him the power to tread it. Such power is not to be conceived in any magical way. It does not make a man of different potentiality, but it does reinforce all his natural powers, quicken his perceptions, and give him the constraining urge of a great ideal. He does not become a different man, but the same man at his very best. The worst side of him has been conquered: the capacity for the

true, beautiful, and good has become enormously increased.

Power then comes through the knowledge that one is linked up with the purposes of God ; is walking self-confessedly in the light of His love ; is sensitive to His approach, and alive to His presence. In the old fairy stories the lowly subject often proved later to be the Prince, who had grown up ignorant of his identity, because of some wicked spell cast upon him. As a subject he would serve the King loyally, but without undue enthusiasm, but once knowing himself to be Prince, his new sense of relationship would give him a new zeal and interest.

To realize the import of God's love and to make continuous response, is to feel that the power of God has strengthened immeasurably one's own life. To use the mystical language of St. Paul, it is to feel that ' I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me.'

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM IN ITS SOCIAL ASPECT

It is not to be expected that in Christ's teaching a detailed application to every part of life can be found. We must not expect, for example, full and clear guidance in economics. To speak of Jesus as though he preached socialism in our sense of the term is to show oneself lacking in historical or critical faculty. It is presupposing that conditions of labour were the same in His day as ours, and that He gave precise instruction. That is, of course, unhistorical and inaccurate.

But one may legitimately draw out inferences from His general principles. Obviously He was opposed to any individualism which meant ruthless competition, the crushing of the weaker by the stronger, and the unrestrained exercise of a power begotten of wealth. For Him there was ' no wealth but life.' All industry is to be measured by its treatment of the individual. A system which prevents any section of the people from leading a full life under healthy conditions stands condemned. This is not to imply that Jesus imagined that because all men were children of God, they should receive equal treatment in any economic system. There should be equality of opportunity, but not necessarily a fixed standard of reward. He knew that men

differed in ability and that there would never be a dull uniformity of men on a common level. The man of the five talents would produce his five talents more, and the man of two talents his two talents more, and both would be rewarded proportionately. What He did protest against was that the great man, earning his five talents, should prevent the lesser man earning his two talents more. One class should not profit at the expense of another, but in co-operation both should have a due reward.

Any system, therefore, which gives undue prominence to the individual, and therefore to qualities of acquisitiveness and self-seeking, instead of the community and its welfare, we may rightly feel, would meet with His stern disapproval. We need not, then, I think, be greatly alarmed that sheer economic necessity is taking us increasingly further from the old individualism. The industrial record of the nineteenth century is the record of an unfair fight between opponents unevenly matched. Under slogans of individual initiative and courage, ruthless competition had full play.

But those with power and wealth (almost synonymous terms) had a primary advantage over the great mass of people who perforce, had to accept dictated terms. The consequence was abominable conditions of labour and wretchedly long hours. It was a system which lent itself to greed, self-interest, and so exploitation. It was in sheer self-defence that unions of the labouring classes sprang up to strive to mediate on fairly equal terms with capitalists.

Meanwhile, in Britain, the Government began

gradually to interfere to assist those who stood in need of help, and could not procure it themselves. From 1870 onwards, there has been State intervention in most phases of life. Very many of those who benefit greatly by State action in such respects as relief in sickness, old age, unemployment, and in education, and improved conditions of labour, are mortally afraid of Socialism and its menace. They would all unknowing, bite the hand that feeds them. Strip the word for a moment of any party significance, and what is Socialism ethically but the community working for the welfare of its individual members.

There are many false bogeys to scare people. 'Gradualness' is a word in common use at the moment, and it is true to the facts of history. Instead of Socialism sweeping down catastrophically at a point in time, and altering the whole order of the society, much to the disadvantage of the rich, and the advantage of the poor, its movement in the English-speaking world will obviously be gradual and experimental. To imagine that unpractical extremists may have their way is to adopt the uncritical attitude of supposing one can legislate far ahead of public opinion. If extremists had their way, it would imply they were in the majority, which would mean they represented the greatest body of public opinion, and so would be no longer extremist.

We may equally discount the argument that Socialism benefits one particular section of the community. If the State has concerned, and will concern itself with the poorer classes and their

welfare, it is for the very good reason that they otherwise would not have an equal chance with the rest of the community in the struggle for existence. By its very name Socialism implies the wellbeing of the whole.

Without any desire to be controversial, I want to say that we may watch the inevitable extension of collectivism in our legislature without undue alarm, and whether we agree or disagree, we can follow with sympathetic interest such movements within industry as profit-sharing and co-partnership. Giving the word a rich, full content, I strongly believe in a Socialistic State which, whilst giving adequate scope for individual initiative and ability, will conserve the interests of the whole. At the same time no Socialistic State is possible unless its members are socially inclined. There must be a sense of brotherhood before there can be a political expression of it. Socialism must rest on a spiritual basis.

Jesus concerned Himself with the affirmation of principles. Their outworking has been left to succeeding ages. He was fundamentally concerned with men, not systems. Yet certain principles He affirmed have an eternal relevance.

He saw that there must be some one in authority whatever be the work involved, but He predicated an identity of interest, and also a service bringing a reward proportionately equal. How else may we interpret the Parable of the Talents? Then He declared that the strong must always be responsible for the weak; the rich for the poor. The principle is capable of universal application. The privileged

and favoured should feel an obligation to the unprivileged and unfavoured. The wise should feel a sense of responsibility for the ignorant, and the saved for the unsaved. All life is a stewardship, whether we have one talent or five, and we are responsible for the right exercise of our gifts. As Mazzini said, ' there are no rights, but duties.'

In the social problems of the community, Jesus declared that the wounded man was everybody's concern. The one test of neighbourliness is whether one will make the misfortunes of one's fellows a personal concern. He condemns the thieves and robbers who exploit their fellow man, and the condemnation applies to all those in any branch of life who have profited at the expense of their neighbours. He condemns equally the Priest and Levite, those who ignore the plight of their fellows, and live as though it was not, and the condemnation applies equally to all who have passed their lives in smug complacency, unmindful of the poverty and wretchedness around. His praise is for the man who waits upon no distinction of ability, tradition, nor convention, but sees a man in need, and helps him. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan is the social gospel. The same note is struck in the Parable of the Judgement recorded by Matthew. The test, then, is one of works. Did you heal the sick, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner ? Inasmuch——

But the two cases are not quite parallel, for in the first, a man is in need of help because of the attack of enemies, and in the second, through the ordinary vicissitudes of life. The call to works of social-

amelioration has always been remembered, and hospitals, mental and poor law institutions, and all our modes of care for the sick and aged, weak and defenceless, have found their original inspiration in it. But the problem of the Jericho road is more difficult. Here the damage done has been intentional, and we can best help future travellers on the road by rooting out the cause of the evil. Now many of the evils which afflicted men along that road have been uprooted. The last signal victory was the abolition of slavery. But there are still outstanding evils of war, alcoholism, gambling, and we can best play the part of the Good Samaritan by tackling these as well as by having regard to their victims.

Few now would openly assert the rightness of war. Most right-thinking people feel it to be a gigantic evil and an intolerable anomaly of our twentieth-century civilization. The only truly Christian position it seems to me is Pacifism, though there may be gradations within it. Blessed are the pacifists (or peacemakers), said Jesus, for they shall be called the children of God. It follows, then, that anything which promotes peace demands Christian support. That is why every Christian should be a member of the League of Nations Union, and why every Christian should press for arbitration and gradual disarmament. There is not, and can never be, a brief for war.

The problem of gambling is not so easily defined and not so easily tackled. There is a vast amount of speculation which comes perilously close to gambling, as there is a great deal of personal gambling

which never goes under that name. The trade in gambling at places of public resort, such as race courses and dog tracks, can be tackled by legislation. But for a long time yet before legislation on gambling can become effective, we must, in any way open to us, educate public opinion.

The problem of drink, like that of war, is easy to define. The social and spiritual aspects of the problem have been impressed upon the community by Temperance reformers for a long time past. But to-day, there is the emergence of two new factors, the scientific and the economic. It has now been shown conclusively that drink is not a stimulant, but a narcotic drug. Even brandy is not a cardiac stimulant as people have supposed, but only an irritant, with precisely the same effect as sal volatile, or burnt feathers applied to the nose. It has been demonstrated that alcohol attacks first the higher levels of the mind. It takes away the power of self-criticism, then it affects a man's sense-perceptions and skilled movements (consider the danger in this mechanical age !), and last of all, it saps a man's self-control, and that is why behind so many crimes lies the tragedy of Drink.

The economic argument is just as strong. It is not very illuminating to say the problem is solving itself, when two hundred and eighty-eight million pounds are spent annually on drink. This enormous amount spent on a non-productive industry is crippling our national resources. Time and again the economic aspect of the drink problem has been developed, and by no one more vividly and em-

phatically than by Mr. Philip Snowden. He has shown that if one-tenth of the money spent on alcohol was deflected into the support of a staple industry such as cotton, there would not be a loom or spindle idle in Lancashire ; if a small part of the money spent on alcohol was devoted to pensions, every eligible person, at the age of sixty-five, would receive thirty shillings a week instead of what, to many, must be the miserably inadequate sum of ten shillings weekly. If just a fraction was put into an endowment scheme, every child who might benefit, could go through a secondary school to the University : and after all this, much would be left to use in the re-organization of industry. Dr. Salter has shown in his own constituency in industrial London, the altogether disproportionate part drink plays in the family budget, making it necessary to forego some of the very necessities of life.

Mr. Snowden was surely right in maintaining that if the money people now spent on drink remained with them, there would be a greater purchasing capacity, and this, if wisely directed, would so foster productive trades, that there would be a rehabilitation of industry. In the boom thus afforded to industry, those hitherto employed in the liquor trade would easily be absorbed. Alcoholism is so nearly related to all other great problems of national life that its solution would lighten tremendously the pressure laid upon us.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the spiritual and social are only the reverse and obverse sides of the same teaching. The one is a direct

consequence of the other. Love for man means a desire to help him, but it is grounded in love for God. Loving God, who is our Father, we love men who are His children and our brethren. Jesus never made an unnatural divorce between sacred and secular ; spiritual and social. All life for Him was a unity. In the great prayer He has given us, the petition for daily bread follows immediately upon the great imponderables with which the prayer opens. Economics are brought into direct relation with God. Perhaps the point at which we have most strayed from Christ is the false division we have introduced into life.

Jesus was a child of Nature, speaking of the sky, the field, the sparrow, the lily, the sower, in tender intimate terms. He was a child of man, hating to see the miserable in their misery, and the poor in their poverty, healing the sick, consorting with publicans and sinners. He was a child of God, finding His strength in simple uninterrupted communion with God the Father. But the three were one, and His life was a single act of worship. That is at once our reproach and our inspiration.

CHAPTER V

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

THERE is no obvious coherency in our Lord's teaching on the Kingdom. We are not given a detailed plan. He seems at different times to have spoken of the Kingdom in different ways. The main development, however, seems clear. The Kingdom was to come with the Messiah, and Jesus, who knew Himself to be the chosen one, spoke of the Kingdom as ushered in by His advent. The signs which Jewish apocalyptic had associated with the dawn of a Messianic Kingdom, He saw fulfilled in His own works and ministry. We have His own declaration in His native synagogue, and His command to the disciples of John the Baptist to tell their master what they saw. He told His enemies that the Kingdom of God was in their midst.

Only those, however, are in the Kingdom who recognize it. A main note in His teaching is that individual acceptance of Himself which means membership into His Kingdom. His invitation for all classes to follow Him: the young to a life of sacrifice, the old to receive refreshment of spirit. His whole teaching that such a recognition of His person would lead to a new fulness of life, is a statement that the Kingdom begins with Himself,

but rests on the individual acceptance of His Person by believers.

Jesus talked as patiently and as long to individuals as He did to great numbers of people. More than once He shunned publicity and refused to show Himself. Always He sought to convince one person, rather than mildly influence many. A teacher who wants a revolution in the soul resulting in a complete change of life, must be content at the moment with a relatively small number of followers. But that is the method of Jesus. He wanted people to come to Himself that they might walk in His way, accept His truth, and share His life. To accept His values of life and be informed by His power, gives at once a new outlook and a new energy. And this is the new life into which men are led.

There is a protest to-day against this individual basis on which Christianity rests. It is felt to be so hopelessly slow in an age which revels in speed. It is felt to be outworn in a collectivist age which is used to mass production. But in affairs of the soul, there can be no undue haste. To precipitate matters, and strive to begin half-way, is to nullify the whole effort. A nation, however splendid its national achievements, rests ultimately on the character of its people, and its greatness depends on the worth of that character. The spirituality of a nation will be reflected in its particular strength and weaknesses. The very architecture bespeaks the main interests of a people. Those who contrast the great mediæval cathedrals with the modern subjects of architectural

genius, will have a certain, though not final, guide to the different outlooks of the periods. But it is in the poetry, songs, plays, recreations, interests of a nation that we can read its values of life. A country betrays its inner spirit by the things which occupy it most.

Now if the problem be to change the standards of an age, and any Utopia worth the name means an advance in spiritual values, there must be a change in spirit. If civilization rests on character, then debased character means a low standard in civilization. The point is that no change by material instruments is enough. In a loose manner of talking, we are all idealists. Even the grumbler is an idealist, because his very dissatisfaction implies a standard of comparison which has made his grumble possible. But everything depends on the nature of the ideal. If it is merely to increase personal pleasure and comfort, then luxury trades thrive. Though even here, much rests on current ideas of comfort and pleasure. When they are gross and material, there come those vulgarities in modern civilization which jar upon a sensitive mind. On a higher level, an ideal which would include other people's happiness within its own, may lead to finer features of civilization receiving emphasis.

But the great changes in the progress of any people have come because the level of the personal and material has been wholly transcended. It is a spiritual sensitiveness in people which has made abuses intolerable, and hastened reforms. The disappearance of the cruel, brutal sports which

were once so popular; the removal of the harsh barbarities which once disfigured the penal code; the reform in conditions of labour, and the abolition of the slave trade, are all indications of a change in spirit which has meant material advance. It is, of course, only in such way that sweated labour, alcoholism, war, and all social evils will disappear. Enlightened egotism will never build the city of God, for that task needs vision and a different set of tools.

Whilst the ideal we hold must have deep spiritual content, it must also have an independent objectivity if it is to be made explicit to ourselves. We must build after a pattern. That is why the ideal of the Kingdom of God, spiritual and objective, bringing with it transformation of the individual preceding that of society, is essential to a new world.

There are other forces, but of themselves they cannot regenerate society. Some place great weight on the value of wise and beneficent legislation. Undeniably, wise laws will help to remove hindrances to the good life, but of themselves they cannot bring in the Kingdom of God. The Parisian rabble ran through the streets shouting Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, but a just appreciation of Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood depends upon more than a reformed calendar, and a change of political system, and because there was not a deep spiritual appreciation of these spiritual values the revolution only very imperfectly realized its ideal. Napoleon, the great product of the revolution, drained his country's blood, in a career of military

conquest, far more thoroughly than the old Monarchy, and he did it with his country's consent.

When the States of America drew up their Charter, they intended to avoid all the pitfalls of other Constitutions, but because there has not been any adequate spiritual appreciation of its values by its people, there is as much corruption, injustice, lack of liberty, there, as in European countries.

Communist Russia has proved to the world that you never effect a real communism by a use of material weapons alone. In Russia, there is full liberty only for those who 'lie low and say nuffin',' or those who favour the new order. No system, however perfect, is sufficient if the spiritual training of its people is neglected.

Nor is social reform a panacea for all ills. Environment counts greatly, but reform of surroundings without regeneration of spirit, is of slight value. As one has said, the essential problem is not to take a man out of the slum, but to take the slum out of a man. Give people a fairer, healthier means of life, but make sure that they can appreciate and utilize new conditions.

Education is of tremendous worth, but a man may be cultured, well-educated, and still remain parasitically useless, or positively dangerous to the community. A wrong ideal in education turned a great nation like Germany into a vast military machine. We need to stress the ultimate end towards which all education ought to aim.

But the value of legislation, social reform, and education depends upon the vision which informs

them. They are all creations of the spirit, and are good, bad or indifferent, according to the spiritual apprehension which lies behind them. We are thrown back then, on the necessity for idealism and regenerated character. The merit of Christianity is that it supplies a teaching and a person, ideals and power. Effect a change at the centre and ultimately it will be felt at the circumference. The Kingdom of God begins to come when men know Jesus and follow in His way. Before one saves the world it is wise to begin with oneself. One cannot sincerely desire to see righteousness and peace and joy established in the world unless one is righteous, peaceful, joyful.

The Kingdom of God then begins in the individual. At the same time, salvation has a social reference. We are saved to save others. One cannot love God with heart, soul, strength, mind, and one's neighbour as oneself, without society being affected. The influence of Christians is altogether disproportionate to their numbers. Their enthusiastic prosecution of Christian ideals is as a pebble flung into a lake, whose ripples reach to a far shore.

Nor can society do without such leavening. Evolution is not necessarily synonymous with progress. It is eternally true that without a vision the people perish. We have developed the cult of the body and the mind, but there is a culture of the soul just as urgently needed. Graham Wallas, in his *Art of Thought*, has shown that mastery in other fields has not yet meant mastery of thought. We have perfected the means of war, without yet being

able to live without it. We are economically interdependent, but we have not yet learnt to live together. Science is giving us strange and wonderful gifts, but we have not yet learnt a wise discrimination. The more rich and complex a civilization, the greater the need for spiritual understanding to direct its knowledge, and utilize its resources for high ends. Nothing is more dangerous than a boy with a live bomb in his hands, unless it be a civilization with all the implements of science and without a soul.

We have evolved industrially from the easy informal relations of 'Jack and his Master,' to the great modern combines, which may be, but is not necessarily progress, unless a certain idealism controls the combine. We have evolved from a time when people lived in an unspoilt countryside, and breathed unpolluted air, to a time of great cities, with vast, congested areas, and a smoke-laden atmosphere. However much we may speak of economic necessity, such a condition is not necessarily progress. More than material evolution is needed if the attendant problems of slumdom, poverty, and unemployment are to be faced. We have evolved from woad and the spear to the cannon and poison gas. This is evolution, but not progress.

Christianity, then, is essential to the well-being of society, because it takes all the wealth given to a civilization from so many sources, and uses it in the best way. The Kingdom begins in the individual, but it permeates society, and this is the second element in Christ's teaching. It is the truth He

stressed in the parables of growth, and in such sayings as Christians being the salt of the earth, lamps, cities set on a hill.

But in the last analysis Jesus saw the Kingdom would be consummated by God alone. 'Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in Heaven.' The question of our Lord's literal belief in apocalyptic is a vexed one. There is still a strong school, headed by Schweitzer and Burkitt, who maintain that Jesus believed as His contemporaries, and Himself expected to come again in a catastrophic decisive fashion. There is much to lend colour to this view. At the same time certain considerations are worth notice. The Jews, unlike the Greeks, very often made use of metaphor which far transcended the actualities of ordinary life. They employed language, which often seems violent and strained, to express their keen sense of a tremendous drama in which eternal issues were at stake. Whilst the early records undeniably contain much apocalyptic matter, even if St. Mark's Gospel, Chapter XIII, be accepted as a later recension, yet it is by no means the only, or even the chief, element in His preaching. We never move in an atmosphere of suppressed tension and uneasy excitement before the great dénouement.

Scholars are gradually placing more value on the historical record of St. John than seemed possible at one time, and in any case, it is felt that he interpreted the mind of his Master with more sympathy and deeper understanding than any other Evangelist.

Now in St. John's Gospel there is scarcely any mention of a dramatic Second Coming. Instead, we have the doctrine of the Holy Spirit developed, and the end at the age is conceived in spiritual terms. The conception of the returning Messiah is replaced by that of the Holy Spirit, who is the Paraclete guiding men into all truth.

But whatever weight Jesus may have put upon the imagery He used, and however He interpreted the end, yet he realized that it was in the hands of God. Of that hour no one knows, not the angels, nor even the Son, but the Father which is in Heaven. Behind all His teaching on the end, two things stand out. There will be a consummation of all things, and the ultimate responsibility lies with God.

Since our Lord's day, man's whole cosmogony has been changed. When the earth was conceived as flat, it was possible to believe that all men would be able to see the Son of Man when He appeared in the clouds of Heaven. But science, quite apart from demonstrating the physical impossibility of such occurrences, looks with unkindly eyes on supernatural irruptions into the natural order. The profound sense of unity in Nature is disturbed by ideas of catastrophic interventions to help Nature out of dilemmas. A changed view of the universe has brought a changed view of God's methods. It is true, science is discovering natural laws which operate through the universe, but it is not true that therefore we do not need the hypothesis of God.

Science, indeed, has only shown that the old idea of God as outside His universe, interposing when He

wills, is utterly false. The words of Paul have a new significance. God is in all, through all, and yet above all. He is always within His universe working through His laws, yet greater than them. The wonder and majesty of Nature have been shown as never before. A new terminology has been given to us. Instead of speaking of things as inanimate, static, inert, we use terms such as movement, energy, life. We employ the language of organism, not mechanism. Untold potentialities have been discovered in the atom, and we have been told to look with fresh eyes upon a world throbbing with life and power. Scientists are harnessing resources which they cannot explain, and we are daily under service to forces we do not understand.

This has a repercussion on religious thought. We are beginning to see that the spiritual coming of the Kingdom of God is more true to God's method than the old idea of a dramatic intervention. The slow permeation of religious ideas, and the slow, but deliberate march of man to higher levels, suggests a 'far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves.' Written on the pages of history is man's failure to live without God. The logic of human experience slowly convinces men of the inherent folly of sin, and the wisdom of righteousness. Gradually abuses are removed, old ways of living abandoned, and new ventures made. We have come to see that there are laws of life as well as of Nature, and that in keeping of them is our salvation. When the *Titanic* crashes into an iceberg, it is the *Titanic* which sinks, and when a civilization, however

imposing, runs counter to the true laws of prosperity and advancement, it is the civilization which perishes. Slowly these laws are being learnt. We are coming to see that hatred, strife, suspicion, envy, greed, and fear are all disruptive forces, and therefore ultimately destructive. We are coming to see that love, service, sacrifice, implying mutual help and co-operation, is the only sane policy for peoples who have to live in common on the one globe. The end is still far off, but though the advance is painfully slow, and there are innumerable set-backs, one dares believe that men ultimately will come to see that life lies in the full acceptance of God's will. And when His will is done on earth, the Kingdom will have come.

The great essential is for men to believe that God is in control, and that the consummation of the Kingdom depends upon Him. Science has not displaced God as some used to believe, but by making life more easy and comfortable, it has taken away from many the old eager spirit of inquiry and search. The need for God is not felt so acutely as in days when life was much harder, and its mysteries seemingly more profound. The former dissatisfaction with the world of time caused men to find in God the succour and comfort denied them on earth. But now, conditions of life are relatively easier, and its activities more varied and complex. Life can be so busy that it is easy to forget God, and have no leisure to think on His demands.

Yet this is the essence of shallow thinking, for apart from God life is still the mystery that it ever

was. There are still the problems of life and death, sin and sorrow, joy and pain. Still, there are the great questions to be answered—Whence have we come? Why are we here? Where are we going? We are still stricken with remorse, moved by sorrow, tormented by our hopes and fears. Still we are haunted by yearnings and aspirations too big to be held captive by this small world. 'We feel that we are greater than we know.' The Preacher was right in saying that eternity had been set in our hearts, and because it is so, Augustine was right in declaring that we are restless till we find rest in God.

The one thing that guarantees permanence and progress in time is an eternal Order behind it. Morality has no objective validity, but is only a social convention unless there be a spiritual basis on which it rests. In fact, there is no reason why we should not live as beasts of the field if we are blindly thrown up on the shores of time, and have no eternal destiny as the children of God. So the intrinsically valuable elements in a material time-order are ultimately derived from spiritual sources. We cannot do without God, just as He has made Himself a co-worker together with us. Here, then, is God's method of bringing in the Kingdom. In the fight of Jesus against disease, ignorance, sin, we see in time the eternal attitude of God. But as we grow in the knowledge and love of God, the Kingdom comes.

There is, however, a truth in the catastrophic view of the Kingdom which ought never to be over-

looked. The world will not smoothly and quietly move on to its final destiny. God is not so much a part of His universe that its harmony is never disturbed. Even Nature has its grim, terrifying disturbances ; and in human nature there are awful depths and strange heights bringing with them tremendous results. The spiritual order, likewise, will never offer a precise and definite explanation. No man will sanely attempt to forecast and tabulate the workings of God. There will ever be that which defies human analysis. God's ways are past finding out, but we do feel Him to be a direct participant, and not an idle spectator in the life of the ages. In those great men, by whom humanity has advanced, who does not feel God has directly spoken ; and in those great, shattering events through which men have had opportunity to gain fresh knowledge, who has not felt a more than temporal significance ? Not once, but many times, the Son of Man has come with power on the clouds of Heaven. God hath raised up a mighty salvation for us, and repeatedly raised up men and provided occasions that such salvation might be more fully apprehended.

We cannot, because of new knowledge, depart from an old attitude. It is still a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. It is still absurdly pathetic to vaunt ourselves on our little knowledge, and assume an independence we have no right to feel. Far truer than that is the metaphor of God as consuming fire, whose coming is attended by strange and terrible happenings, on whose care we utterly depend.

One thing is certain. Since God is supreme in His own universe, spiritual values must ultimately prevail. However long the fight may be, and however great the odds, the victory lies with God.

CHAPTER VI

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN HISTORY

The Kingdom of God is a perfect adjustment of society and the individual. On a basis of individualism a collectivist structure is raised. Men come to God singly, but they live in the fellowship of a common experience. Jesus saw that redemption was personal, but the new life following was social. The Church was not unmindful of the lesson. One of the earliest experiments in Church life was in communism.

The incident of the collection for the poor at Jerusalem is an instance of the solidarity of the Churches. The need of one was the need of all. It is true that not until after the hope of an immediate Second Coming had died down, do the signs of organization begin definitely to appear, and the intercourse of Churches developed and systematized.

It would be wrong to imply that the unity of Christendom was never broken. There were points of contention great and small. The date of Easter was a controversy which, for the moment, made a cleavage between East and West. Even the canon of Scripture was not determined until late in the second century, and canons of orthodoxy were settled only by later councils. Consequently, in the early

centuries, there was much room for divergence of views. One can trace early the beginnings of what later became the two great Antiochene and Alexandrian schools of thought, and on central positions of faith and practice, there was no established agreement until the Council of Chalcedon.

Despite this, there was a real sense of Brotherhood within the Christian Church. There was a pressure from outside to make Christians conscious of the things they held in common. A certain exclusiveness was essential if the purity of Christianity was to be preserved, and if it led to the charge of hatred of the human race, it made their own rule of life more precious.

When the very popularity of Christianity had broken down the old insularity, and the distinction between Christian and pagan modes of life had become much less rigid, the way was being prepared for the eventual conquest of the empire by the once despised faith. Yet the sense of Brotherhood was not lost. The growth of organization, the meeting of Synods and Councils, gave outward expression to the fellowship of Christian believers. That great work of Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, which sums up the past, vindicates the present, and points the way for the future, is a great statement of Christianity in social terms.

And the Church of the Middle Ages was true to her conception of our Lord's teaching on the Kingdom of God. It boldly proclaimed the rule of God on earth, with the Pope as vicegerent, and prince and people as subjects in a heavenly Kingdom.

Pope and Emperor claimed spiritual and civil allegiance of peoples, but the Pope's claim was more effective than that of the Emperor. For many centuries there was a real spiritual unity of Christendom, and splendid results followed. Latin was a *lingua franca;* there were no national boundaries. Pilgrims, monks, crusaders from all countries jostled each other on their ways to the several shrines and holy places. Learning was fostered, and the wisdom of the past garnered ; works of charity were performed. Under the shadow of monastery gates the poor and sick were tended. There was some attempt to moralize industry. On the still half-civilized peoples of Europe, Christianity, through the Church, had a civilizing effect. The cult of the Virgin and Child, and the invocation of Saints, transformed their temper. What otherwise might have been ruthless savagery, was transmuted into chivalry, and undisciplined energy was directed into the Crusades. Those who would pass a sweeping condemnation on the poverty of thought and life in the Middle Ages ought to think of the great Mediæval Churches, and then pause. The tragedy lay in the steady growth of magic and superstition in the undivided Church.

But the main failure of the Mediæval Church to preserve the unity of Christendom was due to its imperfect conception of the Kingdom of God. The first mistake was to declare that outside the Church was no salvation. Arising out of this, the second and third mistakes were to insist on a rigid organization and theology. It is wrong to regard those who differ

in ritual, or dogma, as outside the pale, but tolerance is one of the last virtues to be learnt by man. The protest was heard centuries before Luther nailed his theses to the cathedral door at Wittenberg. It was to be expected that the expansion of human personality through learning and travel would lead to much chafing of spirit. The Renaissance is the emergence of the individual. The universe had been discovered, and man's rightful place within it. In art, in letters, in politics, in love of dress, of feasting, of physical prowess and of sport, man struck against the accepted canons. Man was not lowly and abject, but like a god. There was a pagan delight in the earth and its good things, and in man and his lordship of creation. The self-expression of the individual in religion came with the Reformation. But once the collectivism of Christianity had been broken, there was no limit to the disrupting influence of individualism. The process did not stop with national Churches. It led ultimately to the many sects and cults of to-day. In the same way, individualism run riot in politics, led to an exaggerated nationalism that produced senseless and endless wars. With the rise of industrialism the influence of extreme individualism produced its baneful results.

So once more has come a reaction. We live in the age of a new collectivism. Nations have found that nationalism defeats its own ends. A system of alliance and counter-alliance maintaining a precarious Balance of Power has given place to a League of Nations. As much by the sheer logic of facts and the experience of history as by any idealism, nations

are slowly feeling they can best develop their own life as they live in concert with other peoples.

In industry we have moved from the solitary weaver, plying his single loom, through the capitalist and the small company, to the combines and monopolies of the present moment. The final (though not the essentially necessary) step would seem to be State management. At all events the process from individualism to collectivism is tolerably clear.

In the legislation of our own country the same movement is seen. The influence of Benthamism lasted until well after the middle of last century, but from 1870, there has come the steady increase of State interference. The Education Bills, Employer's Liability Acts, and Health Insurance Acts have been outstanding measures in what is a steady movement. We are, indeed, all Socialists now. Sidney Webb draws a lively picture of the Tory Councillor preparing a paper on 'The dangers of collectivism,' in the municipal library, and then consulting his watch under the municipal street lamp, and correcting it by the municipal clock, and afterwards walking across the municipal park to meet his daughter, who has come by the municipal tram. Dicey, in his great work, *Law and Opinion in England,* has shown the complete triumph of collectivism in Law.

In religion, the inadequacy of a pure individualism has long been felt. The reproach of a disunited Christendom has moved men of differing beliefs to try and find a common meeting ground. In Canada and Scotland, great Churches have united, and in

South India, another such union has been proposed. Very shortly, the union of the three principal Methodist denominations will be consummated. Meanwhile, Lambeth, Lausanne, Jerusalem, are names familiar to Christians of all bodies.

Whatever comes of such movements they symbolize a departure from the old isolated individualism. In religion we are moving to a new collectivism which may surely mean a moving toward the Kingdom of God. And to guide us we have the tragic failure of the old attempt made in the Middle Ages. We can never hope for uniformity of worship. To expect agreement in ceremony, ritual, or organization, is futile and unnecessary. It cannot even be expected in theology, for theology is only man's intellectual expression of religious truth, and must always be dated in time. There will never be a period when men will come to universal agreement in a system of dogma.

A unity of the spirit must precede any visible union. This will be effected when men come together in homage to Jesus Christ, and in acceptance of His way of life. The difference between Jesus and the great men of the ages is that He offers immeasurably more and can fulfil His offer. Obviously it is religion only which concerns itself specifically with the soul and salvation. Art and letters, and the various branches of learning make no profession of reaching and transforming the soul of man. But the whole province of religion is to train man's instinct for God. And in the many religious systems, all redemptive, Christianity is pre-eminently

the religion of redemption, and Jesus the great universal Redeemer of men. That is because He never spoke of sin as other than darkly terrible. There is no equivocation and no compromise. The fact of sin is faced, and the means of deliverance shown. It is rather fashionable to explain away sin, or at least, to minimize it, by using a different terminology. But sin remains, dark and ugly as ever. However wide a connotation is given to the word salvation, it expresses a universal need. And the centuries declare that in Jesus this universal need has been met. In the spirit of His teaching, and with the example of His life, we can be drawn into a fellowship which is the Kingdom of God. His blood is the final witness of His love, and so by that blood we are redeemed. The rallying point, then, for all Christians, of whatever sect, lies in loyalty to the teaching and Person of Jesus. For men may agree in qualities of the disposition such as meekness, humility, purity, who would never subscribe to the same theological dogmas ; and in the person of Jesus Christ and His attitude to life, a true identity of interest may be found. All Christians may tread in common the way of love, service, sacrifice, which is the way of Jesus. All Christians may acknowledge God's Fatherhood, and therefore, the supremacy of spiritual values ; the family of man and its mutual obligation, and this is the truth of Jesus. All Christians may experience that quickening friendship which is the life of Jesus. On this basis, wide and deep, Christendom may be at one.

And so one is led to make a final point. There

must obviously be some relation between the Church and the Kingdom. In the Gospels very few references to the Church can be found. In the Synoptic Gospels one of the few really significant sayings is the baffling reply to Simon Peter's declaration. The very fact that it has lent itself to diverse interpretations shows that Jesus made no explicit, detailed statement. Indeed, He used the language of metaphor, and drew two vivid pictures. Whatever be the precise meaning of the rock upon which the Church stands, it is obviously a common basis for believers. It is the picture of a closely knit fellowship. The phrase which shows the gates of hell unable to withstand the impact of the Christian Church is surely a picture of such a Fellowship in action. It is a Church so militant that it bears down the gates of hell in its onward rush.

If the Church then, be given a wider meaning than merely membership of an organized body, and rests on the wider basis of loyalty to Jesus and His way, in whatever form that may be interpreted, then it has become one with the Kingdom. In that sense, the terms are interchangeable, but at present, the Church is that part of the Kingdom which is organized and established. 'On to the bound of the Waste,' said Matthew Arnold, 'On to the City of God.' The Fellowship of the Kingdom is only a minority in a community, but it is an active, restless minority permeating society with its views, pulling down strongholds and prosecuting a righteous war. The end of all such striving is that blessed day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God, and of His Christ.

EPILOGUE

THE CHALLENGE

THE picture I have tried to give is one of a fellowship militantly engaged in life's highest adventure. But whilst there is an eager, active, crusading spirit, necessary if wrong is to be overcome, and the reign of God established, the quiet, receptive spirit content to wait humbly before God is also necessary. John Ellerton concluded his fine evening hymn with the lines :

> Thy Kingdom stands and grows for ever
> Till all Thy creatures own Thy sway.

The sentiment is true. Before we can grow, we must stand. The first great essential is to be still and know God. Before truths are proclaimed, and errors denounced, there must be spiritual conviction and illumination, and that is never an active, hurried process. We serve, as Milton said, even when we stand and wait. In some old Orders of the Roman Church, the members were monks as well as crusaders, but the danger was that they forgot they were monks, and only remembered they were crusaders. It is an ever-present danger. We may be so conscious of the urgency of the warfare that we forget that our very activity loses effectiveness if our inward spiritual life is not sustained. The

Kingdom has always its passive and active side. It stands and grows.

Again it is easy to speak of the Kingdom as a whole, and forget it is composed of individual members. What applies to the whole applies to the individual. We who would be warriors of the Kingdom must remember One who spent long seasons in meditation and communion. There is a mysticism which is practical. They fight best who best understand why they fight, for whom they fight, and against whom they contend. Such understanding is born of quietness and reflection.

But what can be more challenging, daring, and adventurous than such a life ? Surely in the membership of the Kingdom is the highest art of living, through which the supreme values of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness are best conserved. Jesus spoke with a strange rapture and wonder of a new life into which those already alive might be born. It was to Him a pearl of great price, for which all else must be gladly given. It was a marvellous hidden treasure, to gain which, man must count no price too great to pay.

And we know He was right. We feel that higher levels are possible, that life in an abundance only dimly perceived is somehow, somewhere, possible. We are haunted by God in the stars, the flowers, and the sun ; the far flung, widespread glories of Nature. We are haunted by the maddening beauty of His person in colour, sound, and form ; music, art, letters, with their insistent urge to seek a glory more glorious than they. We are tormented by

mysterious voices from the depths of our own being ; stricken by remorse, hurt by failure, tortured by hopes, fears, cravings, desires ; we cry out for what the world cannot give, because it has it not. We rebel against the limitations of time.

Yet all these voices declare that the true wisdom is not to be found in them. They urge us to seek, but never cause us to find. They compel us to knock, but no door is opened. Always they drive us to ask and ask and ask, but nothing is given.

Where may our questing end ? Where may our restless cravings find fulfilment ? Those who have gone beyond the manifestations of God to God Himself ; those who have passed beyond fleeting glimpses to the open radiance of His beauty, these know that in the fellowship and service of the unseen and eternal God, they have lighted upon the great secret of life. They have learnt that in the presence of God is fulness of joy for evermore.

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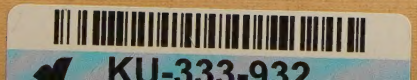
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